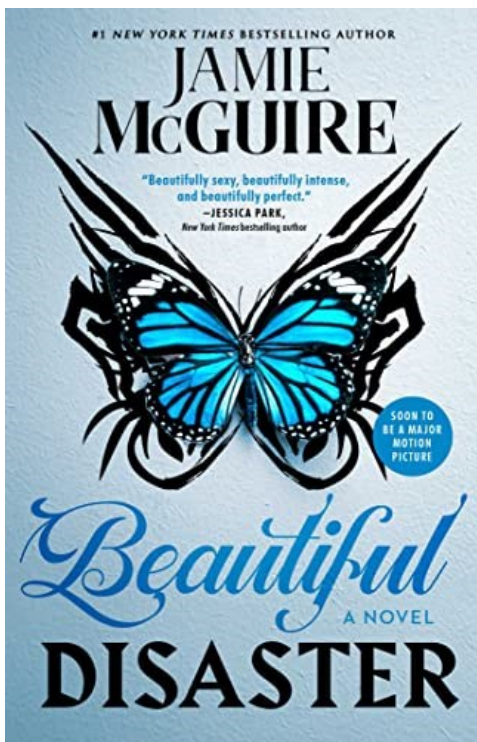


# BEAUTIFUL DISASTER



*Young Adult*

**By Jamie McGuire**

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## CONTENT WARNING

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### Book Summary:

Two young college students fall in love.

### Summary of Concerns:

This book contains profanity; sexual activities; sexual nudity; alcohol use; and violence.

**4** / 5

**Not For Minors**  
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
1	<p>“Welcome to the bloodbath! If you are looking for Economics 101... you are in the wrong fucking place, my friend! If you seek the Circle, this is Mecca! My name is Adam. I make the rules and I call the fight. Betting ends once the opponents are on the floor. No touching the fighters, no assistance, no bet switching, and no encroachment of the ring. If you break these rules, you will get the piss beat out of you and you will be thrown out on your ass without your money! That includes you, ladies! So don’t use your hos to scam the system, boys!”</p>
2	<p>I promised America that I could handle whatever we happened upon, but at ground zero I felt the urge to grip her toothpick of an arm with both hands. She wouldn’t put me in any danger, but being in a basement with fifty or so drunken college boys intent on bloodshed and capital, I wasn’t exactly confident of our chances to leave unscathed.</p>
3	<p>“Our next fighter doesn’t need an introduction, but because he scares the shit outta me, I’ll give him one, anyway! Shake in your boots, boys, and drop your panties, ladies! I give you: Travis ‘Mad Dog’ Maddox!”</p>
8	<p>He oozed sex and rebelliousness with his buzzed brown hair and tattooed forearms, and I rolled my eyes at his attempt to lure me in.</p>
11	<p>“I’m not sleeping with you. You should give up, now.”          ...“I’m not trying to bag you. I just wanna hang out.”          “Bag me? How do you ever get laid talking like that?”</p>
13	<p>“You’re only making it worse by brushing him off. He’s not used to that.”          “What do you suggest I do? Sleep with him?”          America shrugged. “It’ll save time.” “I told him I’d come over tonight.”</p>
19	<p>He chose a booth in the corner, away from the patches of students and families, and then ordered two beers.</p>
20	<p>“I didn’t say you’re a bad person. I just don’t like being a foregone conclusion for the sole reason of having a vagina.”          ...“I don’t mind being friends, but that doesn’t mean you have to try to get in my panties every five seconds.”          “You’re not sleeping with me. I get it.”</p>
25	<p>“Missed you after the game Saturday, Shep. I drank a beer or six for ya,” he said with a broad white grin.</p>
26	<p>“God, no. I spent the night reassuring my boyfriend that you weren’t going to sleep with Travis.</p>
33	<p>“Hell, yes. In that preppy, missionary-position kind of way.”</p>
35	<p>“Travis Maddox hasn’t tried to sleep with you?”          “We’re friends!” I said in a defensive tone.          “I know, but he hasn’t even tried? He’s slept with everyone.”</p>
37	<p>I didn’t realize Shepley’s apartment was a revolving door for clueless bimbos.          ...My mouth fell open at his lack of remorse. “You’ll have sex with her, but you won’t take her number?”          Travis leaned on the counter with his elbows. “Why would I want her number if I’m not going to call her?”          “Why would you sleep with her if you’re not going to call her?”</p>

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	<p>"I don't promise anyone anything, Pidge. She didn't stipulate a relationship before she spread-eagled on my couch."</p>
38	<p>"My daughter better not drop her panties for some jackass she just met, let's put it that way."            ...I crossed my arms, angry that he made sense. "So, besides admitting that you're a jackass, you're saying that because she slept with you, she deserved to be tossed out like a stray cat?"            ..."Women usually justify their actions with whatever they make up in their heads. She didn't tell me up front that she expected a relationship any more than I told her I expected sex with no strings. How is it any different?"</p>
39	<p>"Are you planning on having sex with me tonight?"</p>
41	<p>I reached across the bed and pulled open the drawer, finding three pens, a pencil, a tube of K-Y Jelly, and a clear glass bowl overflowing with packages of different brands of condoms.</p>
44	<p>Shepley set the plates on the bar, and he and America sat together, satisfying the appetite they more than likely worked up the night before.</p>
47	<p>FINCH TOOK ANOTHER DRAG. THE smoke flowed from his nose in two thick streams. I angled my face toward the sun as he regaled me with his recent weekend of dancing, booze, and a very persistent new friend.</p>
48	<p>"Everyone already assumes we're having sex. You're making it worse."            ..."It's not funny. Do you want the whole school to think I'm one of your sluts?"</p>
50	<p>"You're not jealous, are you, Pigeon?"            "Jealous of what? The STD-infested imbecile you're going to piss off in the morning?"</p>
51	<p>"I meant to ask you about your IDs. They're flawless. You didn't get them around here."            "Yeah, we've had them for a while. It was necessary... in Wichita," I said.            ..."They're fake IDs, Trav," I interrupted. "You have to know the right people if you want them done right, right?"</p>
52	<p>"I need another drink!" I said as a second attempt to change the subject.            "Shots!" America yelled.            Shepley rolled his eyes. "Oh, yeah. That's what you need, another shot."            ...Travis lit a cigarette as he ordered two more beers, and the blonde bit her puffy, glossed lip and smiled.</p>
53	<p>"First of all... I have standards. I've never been with an ugly woman. Ever. Second of all, I wanted to sleep with you. I thought about throwing you over my couch fifty different ways, but I haven't because I don't see you that way anymore. It's not that I'm not attracted to you, I just think you're better than that."            ..."I've had a lot to drink! I'm going to fall!"</p>
54	<p>When I felt his lips and then his tongue against my neck, I pulled away from him.            ...I retreated to the bar and ordered another Corona. Travis took the stool beside me, holding up his finger to order one for himself. As soon as the bartender set the bottle in front of me, I tipped it up and drank half the contents before</p>

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	<p>slamming it to the bar.            ...“Don’t. I could never get drunk enough to let you get me on that couch.”</p>
55	<p>Travis tipped his head back to finish his beer, and then slid his empty bottle down the bar.            ...They were causing a scene with the way she let him grope her, and when he bent her over I turned my back to them.</p>
57	<p>“I should just kiss you and get it over with!” he yelled. “You’re being ridiculous! I kissed your neck, so what?”            ...“I’m not your fuck buddy, Travis.”</p>
58	<p>“Are you calling me a rapist?” he said in a cold, low tone.            ...“I’ve been drinking, all right? Your skin was three inches from my face, and you’re beautiful, and you smell fucking awesome when you sweat. I kissed you! I’m sorry! Get over yourself!”</p>
59	<p>I had an almost ravenous urge to grab his face and plant my mouth on his, but I fought against the alcohol and hormones raging through my bloodstream.            ...“I know I’m drunk, and we just got into a ginormous fight over this, but...”            “I’m not having sex with you, so quit asking,” he said, his back still turned to me.</p>
60	<p>“You mean Ethan the rapist? Yeah, I owe you for that one.”</p>
65	<p>“Hey, baby,” America said, kissing her boyfriend square on the mouth.</p>
72	<p>“If you win, I’ll go without sex for a month.” I raised an eyebrow, and he smiled again.</p>
73	<p>“Anything is worth watching you try abstinence for a change.”</p>
75	<p>“Would you have made me go without sex for a month?”</p>
81	<p>“You’re my best friend. I think I know you better than you know yourself sometimes. I see you two together, and the only difference between me and Shep and you and Travis is that we’re having sex. Other than that? No difference.”            “There is a huge, huge difference. Is Shep bringing home different girls every night? Are you going to the party tomorrow to hang out with a guy with definite dating potential? You know I can’t get involved with Travis, Mare. I don’t even know why we’re discussing it.”</p>
82	<p>He laughed and mumbled, and then I heard not one, but two female voices. Their giggling was interrupted by the distinct sounds of kissing and moaning. My heart sank, and I was instantly angry that I felt that way. My eyes clenched shut when one of the girls squealed, and then I was sure the next sound was the three of them collapsing onto the couch.            I considered asking America for her keys, but Shepley’s door was directly in view of the couch, and I couldn’t stomach witnessing the picture that went along with the noises in the living room.            ...Travis walked across the room, opened the top night-table drawer, picked through his bowl of condoms, and then shut the drawer, jogging down the hall.            The girls giggled for what seemed like half an hour, and then it was quiet.            Seconds later, moans, humming, and shouting filled the apartment. It sounded as if a pornographic movie were being filmed in the living room.</p>

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83	The shouting and other nauseating noises quieted down after an hour, followed by whining, and then grumbling by the women after being dismissed. Travis showered and then collapsed onto his side of the bed, turning his back to me. Even after his shower, he smelled like he'd drunk enough whiskey to sedate a horse, and I was livid that he'd driven his motorcycle home in such a state.
91	Crepe paper and beer cans littered the grass along with empty bottles of liquor.
97	I yanked a T-shirt over my head and then unsnapped my bra, pulling it through the sleeve of my shirt. When I wrapped my hair into a bun on top of my head, I noticed him staring. "I'm sure there's nothing I have that you haven't seen before," I said, rolling my eyes. I slid under the covers and settled against my pillow, curling into a ball. He unbuckled his belt and pulled his jeans down, stepping out of them.
99	You tell America that you don't want to date me, but you get so pissed off when I say the same thing that you storm out and get ridiculously drunk. You don't make any sense."
100	"Shep has been in there for half an hour with the beer shits. Not going in there."
105	Before I had a chance to wonder whether he would kiss me or not, he touched each side of my face and pulled me to him, pressing his lips against mine. They were soft and warm and wonderful. He pulled back once and then kissed me again.
109	When we went out the following Wednesday night, Parker made sure to kiss me in the car.
110	Parker leaned over the table and kissed my lips.
114	When he kissed me goodbye, his lips lingered on mine. He yanked up the parking brake as his lips traveled along the ridge of my jaw to my ear and then halfway down my neck. ... "You are so beautiful," he whispered. "I've been distracted all night, with your hair pulled away from your neck." He peppered my neck with kisses and I exhaled, a hum escaping with my breath. "What took you so long?" I smiled, lifting my chin to give him better access. Parker focused on my lips. He grabbed each side of my face, kissing me a bit firmer than usual. We didn't have much room in the car, but we made the space available work to our advantage. He leaned against me, and I bent my knee as I fell against the window. His tongue slipped inside my mouth, and his hand grabbed my ankle and then slid up my leg to my thigh. The windows fogged within minutes with our labored breath sticking to the cool windows. His lips grazed my collarbone, and then his head jerked up when the glass vibrated with several loud thumps.
115	Travis reeked of whiskey; she had insisted on accompanying him, or he'd asked her to come.
116	"I wasn't going to have sex with him!"
118	"Since the word virgin came out of those beautiful lips of yours... I have a sudden urge to help you out of that dress." ..."Trav, c'mon. Let's get your clothes off and get you in bed."

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	<p>“That’s what I’m talkin’ about,” he chuckled.</p> <p>“How much did you drink?” I asked, finally getting my footing between his legs.</p> <p>“Enough,” he smiled, pulling at the hem of my dress.</p> <p>“You probably surpassed enough a gallon ago,” I said, slapping his hand away. I planted my knee on the mattress beside him and pulled his shirt over his head. He reached for me again and I grabbed his wrist, sniffing at the pungent stench in the air. “God, Trav, you reek of Jack Daniel’s.”</p> <p>“Jim Beam,” he corrected with a drunken nod.</p> <p>“It smells like burned wood and chemicals.”</p> <p>“It tastes like it, too,” he laughed. I pulled open his belt buckle and yanked it from the loops. He laughed with the jerking motion and then lifted his head to look at me. “Better guard your virginity, Pidge. You know I like it rough.”</p> <p>“Shut up,” I said, unbuttoning his jeans, slipping them down over his hips and then off his legs. I threw the denim to the floor and stood with my hands on my hips, breathing hard. His legs were hanging off the end of the bed, his eyes closed, his breathing deep and heavy. He had passed out.</p>
119	<p>He pulled my hair to one side and grazed his lips along my back from one shoulder to the other, unsnapping the clasp of my bra. He kissed the bare skin at the base of my neck and I closed my eyes; the warm softness of his mouth felt too good to make him stop. A quiet moan escaped from his throat when he pressed his pelvis against mine, and I could feel how much he wanted me through his boxers. I held my breath, knowing the only thing keeping us from that big step I was so opposed to a few moments before was two thin pieces of fabric.</p> <p>Travis turned me to face him, and then pressed against me, leaning my back against the wall. Our eyes met, and I could see the ache in his expression as he scanned the bare pieces of my skin.</p> <p>...He leaned in to kiss me, stopping just an inch away. I could feel the heat from his skin radiating against my lips, and I had to stop myself from drawing him in the rest of the way. His fingers were digging into my skin as he deliberated, and then his hands slid from my back to the hem of my panties. His index fingers slid down my hips in between my skin and the lacy fabric, and in the same moment that he was about to slip the delicate threads down my legs, he hesitated. Just when I opened my mouth to say yes, he clenched his eyes shut.</p>
121	<p>Parker had left feeling slighted, Travis waited until I was seeing someone—someone I truly liked—to show an interest in me, and I seemed to be the only girl he couldn’t bring himself to sleep with, even when he was wasted.</p>
124	<p>“He bought you a diamond tennis bracelet? After a week? If I didn’t know better, I’d say you have a magic crotch!”</p> <p>...Travis stumbled around the corner, looking a bit beat up. “You guys are loud as fuck,” he groaned, buttoning his jeans.</p>
132	<p>“Happy birthday, baby!” Finch said, kissing my lips.</p> <p>...He lined up shot glasses along the counter and pulled a bottle of tequila from the bar. “Happy birthday from the football team, baby girl,” he smiled, pouring each shot glass full of Patrón. “This is the way we do birthdays: You turn nineteen, you have nineteen shots. You can drink ’em or give ’em away, but the more you drink, the more of these you get,” he said, fanning out a handful of twenties.</p>



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	<p>“Oh my God!” I squealed.</p> <p>“Drink ‘em up, Pidge!” Travis said.</p> <p>I looked to Brazil, suspicious. “I get a twenty for every shot I drink?” “That’s right, lightweight. Gauging by the size of you, I’m going to say we’ll get away with losing sixty bucks by the end of the night.”</p> <p>“Think again, Brazil,” I said, grabbing the first shot glass, rolling it across my lip, tipping my head back to empty the glass and then rolling it the rest of the way, dropping it into my other hand.</p> <p>“Holy shit!” Travis exclaimed.</p> <p>“This is really a waste, Brazil,” I said, wiping the corners of my mouth. “You shoot Cuervo, not Patrón.”</p> <p>The smug smile on Brazil’s face faded, and he shook his head and shrugged. “Get after it, then. I’ve got the wallets of twelve football players that say you can’t finish ten.”</p> <p>I narrowed my eyes. “Double or nothing says I can drink fifteen.”</p> <p>...“Forty bucks a shot?” Brazil said, looking unsure.</p> <p>...“Hell no! I’ll give you twenty a shot, and when you make it to fifteen, I’ll double your total.”</p> <p>“That’s how Kansans do birthdays,” I said, popping back another shot.</p> <p>An hour and three shots later, I was in the living room dancing with Travis.</p> <p>...“You can’t do that when I start getting into the double-digit shots,” I giggled.</p>
134	<p>“Oh. Well, you wanna witness my sixth shot of Patrón?” I smiled, holding up my five twenties. “I make double if I get to fifteen.”</p> <p>“That’s a bit dangerous, isn’t it?”</p> <p>I leaned into his ear. “I am totally hustling them. I’ve played this game with my dad since I was sixteen.”</p> <p>“Oh,” he said, frowning with disapproval. “You drank tequila with your dad?”</p>
135	<p>I pulled him to the kitchen, picked up another shot glass, and killed it, slamming it on the counter upside down like I had the previous five.</p>
136	<p>Parker glanced around the room and then led me to a hallway. He gently pressed me against the wall, kissing me with his soft lips. His hands were everywhere. At first I played along, but after his tongue infiltrated my lips, I got the distinct feeling that I was doing something wrong.</p> <p>“I just think it’s rude of me to make out with you in a dark corner when I have guests out there.”</p> <p>He smiled and kissed me again. “You’re right, I’m sorry. I just wanted to give you a memorable birthday kiss before I left.”</p> <p>...I knocked back another shot, and laughed when Travis took one from the end, sucking it down.</p>
137	<p>“You’ve made your point,” he said. “You’ve drunk more than any girl we’ve ever seen. I’m cutting you off.”</p> <p>“The hell you are,” I slurred. “I have six hundred bucks waiting on me at the bottom of that shot glass, and you of all people aren’t going to tell me I can’t do something extreme for cash.”</p>
138	<p>“Shots!” I said, stumbling to the counter.</p> <p>...Brazil placed a twenty under the last two glasses, and then he yelled at his</p>

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	<p>teammates, "She's gonna drink 'em! I need fifteen!"</p> <p>...Travis had emptied the other four shots on the other side of my fifteen.</p> <p>"I would have never believed that I could lose fifty bucks on a fifteen-shot bet with a girl," Chris complained.</p> <p>"Believe it, Jenks," I said, picking up a glass in each hand.</p> <p>I knocked back each of the glasses and waited for the vomit rising in my throat to settle.</p> <p>...I closed my eyes and inhaled, picking up the last shot.</p> <p>...I tipped my head and let the tequila flow down my throat. My teeth and lips had been numb since shot number eight, and the kick of the eighty proof had long since lost its edge. The entire party erupted into whistles and yells as Brazil handed me the stack of money.</p> <p>...We danced into the morning, and the tequila running through my veins eased me into oblivion.</p>
140	<p>He had fashioned a soft pallet to sleep on while I expelled the fifteen shots of tequila I'd consumed the night before.</p>
141	<p>"I was mad that she encouraged you to drink so much. I thought we were going to end up taking you to the hospital. One thing led to another, and the next thing I know, we're screaming at each other. We were both drunk, Abby. I said some things I can't take back," he shook his head, looking to the floor.</p>
142	<p>"You let her leave here drunk? Are you some kind of idiot?" I said, grabbing at my purse.</p>
144	<p>"He called me irresponsible! Me! As if I don't know you! As if I haven't seen you rob your dad of hundreds of dollars drinking twice as much.</p>
151	<p>My mouth fell open. "Great! So I'm the school slut now?"</p>
152	<p>"If you didn't sleep with her, mind if I take a shot?" Chris said, chuckling to his teammates.</p>
161	<p>"What are you trying to say, Finch? That I'm a closet lesbian?"</p> <p>..."I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but your sexual orientation isn't exactly a secret, Finch."</p> <p>"Fuck! And I thought I had the mysterious sex-kitten thing going for me," he said, taking another drag.</p>
170	<p>My heart pounded as I touched his neck with my lips and then tasted his flesh in a slow, tender kiss. He looked down with surprise, and then his eyes softened with the realization of what I wanted.</p> <p>He leaned down, pressing his lips against mine with a delicate sweetness. The warmth from his lips traveled all the way to my toes, and I pulled him closer to me. Now that we had taken the first step, I had no intention of stopping there. I parted my lips, letting Travis's tongue find its way to mine. "I want you," I said. Suddenly, the kiss slowed, and he tried to pull away. Determined to finish what I had started, my mouth worked against his more anxiously. In reaction, Travis backed away until he was on his knees. I rose with him, keeping our mouths melded together.</p> <p>He gripped each of my shoulders to hold me at bay. "Wait a sec," he whispered with an amused smile, breathing hard. "You don't have to do this, Pidge. This isn't</p>



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	<p>what tonight is about.”</p> <p>...“Don’t make me beg,” I whispered against his mouth.</p> <p>With those four words, his reservations vanished. He kissed me, hard and eager. My fingers ran down the length of his back and settled on the elastic of his boxers, nervously running along the gather of the fabric. His lips grew impatient then, and I fell against the mattress when he crashed into me. His tongue found its way to mine once again, and when I gained the courage to slide my hand between his skin and the boxers, he groaned.</p> <p>Travis yanked the T-shirt over my head, and then his hand impatiently traveled down my side, gripping my panties and slipping them down my legs with one hand. His mouth returned to mine once more as his hand slid up the inside of my thigh, and I let out a long, faltering breath when his fingers wandered where no man had touched me before. My knees arched and twitched with each movement of his hand, and when I dug my fingers into his flesh, he positioned himself above me.</p> <p>“Pigeon,” he said, panting, “it doesn’t have to be tonight. I’ll wait until you’re ready.”</p> <p>I reached for the top drawer of his nightstand, pulling it open. Feeling the plastic between my fingers, I touched the corner to my mouth, tearing the package open with my teeth. His free hand left my back, and then he pulled his boxers down, kicking them off as if he couldn’t stand them between us.</p> <p>The package crackled in his fingertips, and after a few moments, I felt him between my thighs. I closed my eyes.</p> <p>“Look at me, Pigeon.”</p> <p>I peered up at him, and his eyes were intent and soft at the same time. He tilted his head, leaning down to kiss me tenderly, and then his body tensed, pushing himself inside of me in a small, slow movement. When he pulled back, I bit my lip with the discomfort; when he rocked into me again, I clenched my eyes shut with the pain. My thighs tightened around his hips, and he kissed me again.</p> <p>“Look at me,” he whispered.</p> <p>When I opened my eyes, he pressed inside me again, and I cried out with the wonderful burning it caused. Once I relaxed, the motion of his body against mine was more rhythmic. The nervousness I had felt in the beginning had disappeared, and Travis grabbed at my flesh as if he couldn’t get enough. I pulled him into me, and he moaned when the way it felt became too much.</p> <p>“I’ve wanted you for so long, Abby. You’re all I want,” he breathed against my mouth.</p> <p>He grabbed my thigh with one hand and propped himself up with his elbow, just inches above me. A thin sheet of sweat began to bead on our skin, and I arched my back as his lips traced my jaw and then followed a single line down my neck.</p> <p>“Travis,” I sighed.</p> <p>When I said his name, he pressed his cheek against mine, and his movements became more rigid. The noises from his throat grew louder, and he finally pressed inside me one last time, groaning and quivering above me.</p> <p>After a few moments, he relaxed and let his breathing slow.</p>
177	“You slept with him? You bitch! You weren’t even going to tell me?”

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180	<p>“I don’t know... because I took your virginity?” He leaned toward me, saying the words in a hushed voice.</p> <p>I rolled my eyes. “I’m sure it’s not the first time you’ve deflowered a virgin, Trav.” Just as I had feared, my casual demeanor made him angry. “As a matter of fact, it was.”</p>
182	<p>“If you think I’m just going to go back to fucking around, you’re wrong. I don’t want anyone else. You wanna be friends? Fine, we’re friends. But you and I both know that what happened wasn’t just sex.”</p>
183	<p>He slid in beside me and leaned over, touching each side of my face, kissing me with his plush, soft lips. “Wow,” he breathed, “I’ve missed your mouth.”</p>
184	<p>After dinner, we sat on the couch to watch a movie, but before the beginning credits were over, Parker had me on my back. I was glad I had chosen to wear jeans; I wouldn’t have been able to fend him off as easily in a dress. His lips traveled down to my collarbone, and his hand stopped at my belt. He clumsily worked to pull it open, and once it popped, I slid out from under him to stand up. “Okay! I think a single is all you’ll be hitting tonight,” I said, buckling my belt.</p> <p>“What?”</p> <p>“First base... second base? Never mind. It’s late, I better go.”</p> <p>He sat up and gripped my legs. “Don’t go, Abs. I don’t want you to think that’s why I brought you here.”</p> <p>“Isn’t it?”</p> <p>“Of course not,” he said, pulling me onto his lap. “You’re all I’ve thought about for two weeks. I apologize for being impatient.”</p> <p>He kissed my cheek, and I leaned into him, smiling when his breath tickled my neck. I turned to him and pressed my lips against his, trying my hardest to feel something—but I didn’t. I pulled away from him and sighed.</p>
193	<p>When you’re around, I don’t need booze or money or the fighting or the one-night stands... all I need is you.</p> <p>...Hot tears filled my eyes as I shook my head no. He slammed his lips against mine, and his tongue entered my mouth without hesitation. Unable to control myself, I gripped his shirt in my fists, and pulled him to me. He hummed in his amazing deep voice and gripped me so tight that it was difficult to breathe.</p>
196	<p>My eyebrows shot up. “You said all that to get me in bed? I must have made quite an impression.”</p> <p>...When we finally arrived, Travis carried me up the stairs. I giggled against his lips as he fumbled to unlock the door. When he set me on my feet and closed the door behind us, he let out a long, relieved sigh. “It hasn’t seemed like home since you left,” he said, kissing my lips.</p> <p>...“Fuck no, Trav, you’re not pulling this shit! You’re in love with Ab...” —his eyes focused and he recognized his mistake—“... by. Hey, Abby.”</p> <p>“Hey, Shep,” I said, setting Toto on the floor.</p> <p>Travis pulled me past his still-shocked cousin and kicked the door shut behind us, pulling me into his arms and kissing me without a second thought, as if we had done it a million times before. I pulled his shirt over his head, and he slipped my jacket off my shoulders. I stopped kissing him long enough to remove my sweater and tank top and then crashed into him again. We undressed each other, and</p>

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	<p>within seconds he lowered me to his mattress. I reached above my head to pull open the drawer and plunged my hand inside, searching for anything that crackled.</p> <p>“Shit,” he said, panting and frustrated. “I got rid of them.”</p> <p>“What? All of them?” I breathed.</p> <p>“I thought you didn’t... if I wasn’t with you, I wasn’t going to need them.”</p> <p>“You’re kidding me!” I said, letting my head fall against the headboard.</p> <p>His forehead fell against my chest. “Consider yourself the opposite of a foregone conclusion.”</p> <p>I smiled and kissed him. “You’ve never been with anyone without one?”</p> <p>He shook his head. “Never.” I looked around for a moment, lost in thought. He laughed once at my expression. “What are you doing?”</p> <p>“Ssh, I’m counting.” Travis watched me for a moment and then leaned down to kiss my neck. “I can’t concentrate while you’re doing tha...” —I sighed— “the twenty-fifth and two days...” I breathed.</p> <p>Travis chuckled. “What the hell are you talkin’ about?”</p> <p>“We’re good,” I said, sliding down so I was directly beneath him.</p> <p>He pressed his chest against mine, and kissed me tenderly. “Are you sure?”</p> <p>I let my hands glide from his shoulders to his backside and pulled him against me. He closed his eyes and let out a long, deep groan.</p> <p>“Oh my God, Abby,” he breathed. He rocked into me again, another hum emanating from his throat. “Holy shit, you feel amazing.”</p> <p>“Is it different?”</p> <p>He looked into my eyes. “It’s different with you, anyway, but” —he took in a deep breath and tensed again, closing his eyes for a moment— “I’m never going to be the same after this.”</p> <p>His lips searched every inch of my neck, and when he found his way to my mouth, I sunk my fingertips into the muscles of his shoulders, losing myself in the intensity of the kiss.</p> <p>Travis brought my hands above my head and intertwined his fingers with mine, squeezing my hands with each thrust. His movements became a bit rougher, and I dug my nails into his hands, my insides tensing with incredible force.</p> <p>I cried out, biting my lip and clenching my eyes shut.</p> <p>“Abby,” he whispered, sounding conflicted, “I need a... I need to...”</p> <p>“Don’t stop,” I begged.</p> <p>He rocked into me again, groaning so loudly that I covered his mouth. After a few labored breaths, he looked into my eyes and then kissed me over and over. His hands cupped each side of my face and then he kissed me again, slower, more tender. He touched his lips to mine, and then my cheeks, my forehead, my nose, and then finally returned to my lips.</p>
200	The bed concaved as he shifted, and then his lips were on my back in slow, small kisses.
202	I leaned over to kiss his neck once, and then ran my tongue up to his ear, kissing his earlobe.
207	I jumped on him, wrapping my legs around his waist, and he gripped my thighs as I grabbed each side of his face, plant-ing a long, deep kiss on his mouth. I could

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	feel his anger melt away as he kissed me, and when I pulled away, I knew I had won.
211	“Can you imagine hoping you’re the one he’ll pick? Knowing you’ll be used for sex?”
212	She brought over a square glass full of pink, frothy liquid and three beers.
214	“We’ve all had a lot to drink. Let’s just get out of here.”
216	“Travis, you’re drunk. You’re about to make a huge mistake. Just let her go home, cool off... you can both talk tomorrow when you’re sober.”
223	I rolled my eyes and slipped the purple silk over my head, crawling in bed beside him. I straddled his lap and kissed his neck, giggling when he let his head fall against the headboard. “Again? You’re gonna kill me, Pidge.” ...I giggled against his mouth and he flipped me onto my back. His finger slid under the delicate purple ribbon tied at the crest of my shoulder and slid it down my arm, kissing the skin it left behind.
225	You didn’t get all awkward or flirt or run your fingers through your hair. You saw me.” “I was a complete bitch to you.” He kissed my neck. “That’s what sealed the deal.” I slipped my hands down his back and into his boxers. “I hope this gets old soon. I don’t see myself ever getting tired of you.”
226	“Do you even realize how beautiful you are?” he asked, kissing my neck.
230	Travis swigged his beer.
238	He looked over at Parker and then pulled me to him, one hand on the nape of my neck, one hand on my backside, and then kissed me, deep and determined. He worked his lips against mine in the way he usually reserved for his bedroom, and I couldn’t help but grab his shirt with both fists.
240	“I don’t want you to be unable to concentrate in class,” I said, kissing him again. He lifted me up and I wrapped my legs around him. “I’m not sure what I ever did without you,” he said, holding me up with one hand and unbuckling his belt with the other, “but I don’t ever want to find out. You’re everything I’ve ever wanted, Pigeon.” “Just remember that when I take all of your money in the next poker game,” I said, pulling off my shirt.
247	His tongue begged entrance into my mouth, and when I let him in, he moaned.
252	I reached up to take his face between my hands and he wrapped his arms around me, lifting me off the floor. I pressed my lips against his, and he kissed me with the emotion of everything he’d just said. ...I moved my hips against his and ran my hand up his shirt, unfastening his top two buttons, Travis chuckled and shook his head, and I turned around, moving against him to the beat. He grabbed my hips and I reached around, grabbing his backside. I leaned forward and his fingers dug into my skin. When I stood up, he touched his lips to my ear. “Keep that up and we’ll be leaving early.” I turned around and smiled, throwing my arms around his neck. He pressed

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	<p>himself against me and I untucked his shirt, slipping my hands up his back, pressing my fingers into his lean muscles, and then smiling at the noise he made when I tasted his neck.</p> <p>“Jesus, Pigeon, you’re killin’ me,” he said, gripping the hem of my skirt, pulling it up just enough to graze my thighs with his fingertips.</p> <p>...He led me up the stairs, and then grabbed my coat before leading me up to the second floor. We walked out onto the balcony to find Parker and his date. She was taller than I, her short, dark hair pinned back with a single bobby pin. I noticed her pointy stilettos immediately, with her leg hooked around Parker’s hip. She stood with her back against the brick, and when Parker noticed us walk out, he pulled his hand from underneath her skirt.</p>
282	<p>In the elevator of our hotel, he pushed me against the mirrored wall, grabbed my leg, and pulled it up in a quick motion against his hip. His mouth crashed into mine, and I felt the hand under my knee slide up my thigh and pull up my skirt.</p> <p>“Travis, there’s a camera in here,” I said against his lips.</p> <p>“I don’t give a fuck,” he chuckled. “I’m celebrating.”</p> <p>I pushed him away. “We can celebrate in the room,” I said, wiping my mouth and looking down at my hand, seeing streaks of crimson.</p>
284	<p>“You stopped two of his lightweight goons, Travis. What are you going to do if there are a dozen of them? What are you going to do if they come after me during one of your fights?”</p> <p>“It wouldn’t make sense for him to do that. I’ll be making him lots of money.”</p> <p>“The moment you decide you’re not going to do that anymore, you’re expendable. That’s how these people work.”</p> <p>Travis walked away from me and looked out the window, the blinking lights coloring his conflicted features. He had made his decision before he’d ever come to me about it.</p> <p>“It’s going to be all right, Pigeon. I’ll make sure it is. And then we’ll be set.”</p> <p>I shook my head and turned around, shoving our clothes into our suitcases. When we set down on the tarmac at home, he would be his old self again. Vegas did strange things to people, and I couldn’t reason with him while he was intoxicated with the flow of cash and whiskey.</p>
296	<p>In the dim light I could see a tear fall from his eye, and in the next moment he reached out for me and I was in his arms, his lips on mine. He squeezed me tight against his chest as he kissed me, and then cradled my face in his hands, pressing his lips harder against my mouth, desperate to get a reaction.</p> <p>“Kiss me,” he whispered, sealing his mouth on mine. I kept my eyes and mouth closed, relaxing in his arms. It took everything I had not to move my mouth with his, having longed for his lips all week. “Kiss me!” he begged.</p>
312	<p>“I’m not having sex with you.”</p>
315	<p>“I’ve got less than twenty-four hours with you, Pidge. I’m gonna kiss you. I’m gonna kiss you a lot today. All day. Every chance I get...”</p> <p>...When he noticed me staring at his lips, the corner of his mouth turned up again, and he leaned down to press his soft mouth against mine. It began sweet and innocent, but the moment his lips parted, I caressed his tongue with mine. His body instantly tensed, and he took a deep breath in through his nose, pressing his</p>

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	<p>body against me. I let my knee fall to the side and he moved above me, never taking his mouth from mine.</p> <p>He wasted no time undressing me, and when there was no more fabric between us, he gripped the iron vines the headboard with both hands, and in one quick movement, he was inside me. I bit my lip hard, stifling the cry that was clawing its way up my throat. Travis moaned against my mouth, and I pressed my feet against the mattress, anchoring myself so I could raise my hips to meet his. One hand on the iron and the other on the nape of my neck, he rocked against me over and over, and my legs quivered with his firm, determined movements. His tongue searched my mouth, and I could feel the vibration of his deep groans against my chest as he kept to his promise to make our last day together memorable. I could spend a thousand years trying to block that moment from my memory, and it would still be burned into my mind.</p> <p>An hour had passed when I clenched my eyes shut, my every nerve focused on the shuddering of my insides. Travis held his breath as he thrust inside me one last time. I collapsed against the mattress, completely spent. Travis heaved with deep breaths, speechless and dripping with sweat.</p> <p>I could hear voices downstairs and I covered my mouth, giggling at our misbehavior. Travis turned on his side, scanning my face with his soft, brown eyes. "You said you were just going to kiss me." I grinned.</p>
317	Travis stood behind me at every opportunity, his arms wrapped around my waist, his lips on my neck.
328	Travis stumbled in, his arms wrapped around Megan, who was giggling against his mouth. A box in her hand caught my eye, and I felt sick when I realized what it was: condoms. Her other hand was on the back of his neck, and I couldn't tell whose arms were tangled around who.
330	"Travis, you're drunk. Let Abby go home," Shepley said.
331	Her eyes narrowed and she pulled her arm from his grip. "Well then, why don't you go find a random WHORE—" she looked at Megan—" from the Red and bring her home to fuck and then let me know if it helps you get over me."
332	"...You don't see Abby screwing the first guy she sees! It's not Travis that's the problem, Shepley..."
335	We sat down and watched as the dance floor went from being empty to overflowing with drunken college students.
338	<p>"You used to be a sweet drunk."</p> <p>..."Are you gonna sit? I'll buy you a beer."</p>
339	<p>"Because I don't want to watch you maul a different girl every night, and you won't let anyone dance with me."</p> <p>..."Oh yeah? How much did you love me when you were buying that box of condoms?"</p> <p>Travis winced and I stood up, making my way to the table. Shepley and America were in a tight embrace and making a scene while they kissed passionately.</p>
342	By the time the waitress served our beers, Parker had barely taken a breath.
344	Travis chuckled and I elbowed him. He pressed his lips together until the urge to laugh subsided, and then he winked at me, squeezing my hand once again. His



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	<p>fingers intertwined in mine, and I heard a small sigh escape his lips. I knew what he was thinking because I felt the same. In that sliver of time, it was as if nothing had changed.</p>
349	<p>He leaned in, reaching his hand around to my backside.          “I always thought you’d be a nice piece of ass,” he said, breathing stale beer in my face.          ...“Get the fuck off her!” Travis yelled.          In a line between where I stood and Travis’s desperate attempt to reach me, heads turned in my direction. Ethan was oblivious, trying to keep me still long enough to kiss me. He ran his nose across my cheekbone and then down my neck.          “You smell really good,” he slurred.          I pushed his face away, but he grabbed my wrist, unfazed.          ...“You’re fucking hot, you know that?” Ethan said.</p>
354	<p>Shepley knocked on the door as he entered, bringing me a short glass half full of whiskey.          ...I tipped back my head, letting the liquid flow down my throat. My face compressed as the whiskey burned its way to my stomach.          ...“I need another drink,” I said, shoving my empty glass at Shepley.          “Me, too,” Shepley said, returning to the kitchen.          ...Shepley brought four glasses this time, all full to the brim with amber liquor. We all knocked back the whiskey without hesitation.</p>
357	<p>FINCH SET A BROWN BOTTLE in front of me.</p>
359	<p>“Who was that?” Finch asked, setting down four more bottles.          ...By the time Shepley and America rejoined us, six empty bottles sat on the table beside me. My teeth were numb, and it felt a bit easier to smile. I was more comfortable, leaning against my spot on the counter.          ...The alcohol made my body feel heavy and sluggish as I tried to move to the slow tempo.</p>
361	<p>Finch stood beside the table and I sighed with relief when he handed me another beer.          For the next hour, I watched Travis fend off girls and suck down shots of whiskey in the living room.</p>
364	<p>“Go drink another bottle of whiskey, Trav.”</p>
366	<p>In the second it took him to turn and face me, his expression had contorted into anger. He stomped toward me, planting his hands on the bed and leaning into my face.          “WELL, I BELONG TO YOU!” The veins in his neck bulged as he shouted, and I met his glare, refusing to even flinch. He looked at my lips, panting. “I belong to you,” he whispered, his anger melting as he realized how close we were.          Before I could think of a reason not to, I grabbed his face, slamming my lips against his. Without hesitation, Travis lifted me into his arms. In a few long strides, he carried me into his bedroom, both of us crashing to the bed.          I yanked his shirt over his head, fumbling in the dark with his belt buckle. He jerked it open, ripped it ff, and threw it to the floor. He lifted me from the mattress with one hand and unzipped my dress with the other. I pulled it over my</p>

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	<p>head, tossing it somewhere in the dark, and then Travis kissed me, moaning against my mouth.</p> <p>With just a few quick movements, his boxers were off and he pressed his chest against mine. I grabbed his backside, but he resisted when I tried to pull him into me.</p> <p>“We’re both drunk,” he said, breathing hard.</p> <p>“Please.” I pressed my legs against his hips, desperate to relieve the burning between my thighs. Travis was set on us getting back together, and I had no intentions of fighting the inevitable, so I was more than ready to spend the night tangled up in his sheets.</p> <p>“This isn’t right,” he said.</p> <p>He was just above me, pressing his forehead against mine.</p> <p>...In that moment, I only needed him.</p> <p>“I want you.”</p> <p>“I need you to say it,” he said.</p> <p>My insides were screaming for him, and I couldn’t stand it a second longer. “I’ll say whatever you want.”</p> <p>...He shook his head, his lips sweeping across mine. “I need to hear you say it. I need to know you’re mine.”</p> <p>...One side of his mouth turned up as he touched my face, and then his lips touched mine in a tender kiss. When I pulled him against me, he didn’t resist. His muscles tensed, and he held his breath as he slid inside me.</p> <p>“Say it again,” he said.</p> <p>“I’m yours,” I breathed. Every nerve, inside and out, ached for more. “I don’t ever want to be apart from you again.”</p> <p>“Promise me,” he said, groaning with another thrust.</p> <p>...Finally satisfied, he sealed his mouth over mine.</p>
369	<p>TRAVIS WOKE ME WITH KISSES. My head felt heavy and fogged from the multiple drinks I’d had the night before, but the hour before I fell asleep replayed in my mind in vivid detail. Soft lips showered every inch of my hand, arm, and neck, and when he reached my lips, I smiled.</p> <p>...Feeling my heart pounding against my chest, I knew there was no chance of falling back asleep. Travis put both hands on each side of my face and kissed me. His mouth moved differently, as if he were kissing me for the last time. He lowered me to the pillow, kissed me once more, and then rested his head on my chest, wrapping both arms tightly around me.</p>
371	<p>“Had the best sex of my life?” I smiled, squeezing his hand.</p> <p>...I kissed him, touching the sides of his face with tenderness.</p>
377	<p>We were oblivious to the students passing and the snowballs flying overhead as he pressed his lips against mine. My feet left the ground and he continued to kiss me, carrying me with ease across campus.</p>
397	<p>“Here,” he said, handing me a short glass filled with amber liquid. “It’ll help you relax.”</p>
404	<p>“What? You bought condoms?”</p>

Profanity	Count
Ass	44
Bitch	11
Fuck	84
Goddamn	1
Piss	35
Shit	57